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Tenancy Tribunal Backlog Of 348 Cases

A total of 348 cases are awaiting hearing before the Colony's overburdened and understaffed Tenancy Tribunals, officials said today.

So great is the backlog of work that a landlord and tenant dispute arising now cannot come up for consideration by a tribunal for at least six months. The calendar is filled for the next half year.

The time lag could be overcome if more tribunals were established, but that cannot be done until more people come forward to serve on them. That is why the Chief Justice is appealing for volunteers, both men and women, to become members of the Tenancy Tribunal panel.

Up to recently women were not permitted to sit on the housing bodies. Now that they are eligible, officials have high hopes that some of the personnel problems will be solved by their participation.

The Colony has only two tribunals at the present time, one in Hong Kong and one in Kowloon. When the special "courts" were set up under the Military Administration back in December, 1945, there were five. The smaller number today is not due to a decline in housing problems, but to loss of earlier panel members and difficulty of replacing these men with other volunteers.

YEOMANLIKE WORK

Handling disputes arising out of the Colony's most serious problem—housing, the tribunals have done and are doing yeomanlike work for the community.

They have handled 1,340 cases in the 10 months since they started their important work, an average of 67 cases a month. In more than 90 percent of these the parties have accepted the decision of the tribunal, which is staffed by volunteers but functions as a court. Between 7 and 8 percent have been appealed to a higher court, mostly on a point of law.

The Island produced 700 of the cases and the Kowloon area 580. In the vast majority tenants of sub-tenants took the problem to a tribunal. Only 10 to 15 per cent of the complainants were landlords. Seventy per cent of the plaintiffs and defendants were legally represented.

Three out of every five disputes have been between tenants and landlords, involving overcharges in rents, evictions, recovery of property, and other matters arising under the Landlord and Tenant Ordinance of May 23, 1947, and its predecessor, the Military Government's Landlord and Tenant Ordinance. The other 40 per cent are disputes between tenants and sub-tenants.

"INFORMATION, PLEASE!"

Many problems are never brought before a tribunal. A steady stream of puzzled residents flow into offices in the Supreme Court Building in Hong Kong and the Magistrate's Building in Kowloon. A large number are seeking information since they do not understand their rights under the ordinance. When the law is explained, they drop the idea of appealing to a tribunal.

While Chinese form the bulk of persons appearing before the

tribunals, one-fifth of the cases have involved other nationalities—English, Portuguese, Russians, Indians and the like. Housing problems are common to all sections of the population.

A Tenancy Tribunal consists of three persons drawn from the panel of volunteers appointed by the Chief Justice. One acts as chairman. The three hear the evidence of both parties to the dispute, deliberate on the problems and law involved, and arrive at a decision which has the effect of a court order.

Members at times go so far as to visit the disputed premises and measure the space involved.

Proceedings are in English with interpretation in Chinese. Tribunal members realise they have an exciting and important job, and they take it seriously.

PERSONNEL SHORTAGE

Most cases can be handled in an afternoon, but many are not concluded for three or four days. The strain of the work places a heavy burden on volunteers now serving on the Tenancy Tribunal panel. Officials try to call each individual only once a month, but that has been almost impossible with the shortage of personnel.

The aim now is to recruit at least 150 men and women who are capable and willing to give some time to the job. With that number each person would have to serve on only one case every three months, and the number of tribunals could be doubled to catch up with the accumulated cases.

The Tenancy Tribunal will expire at the end of 1948 unless extended by the Legislative Council, which officials think is likely to happen. After all, they point out, the tribunals' work reflects the shortage of living places, and "the community will need the tribunals until the housing problem is solved."

Anglo-Soviet Trade Talks

Moves For Resumption

London, Aug. 8.—The British and Soviet authorities have both moved to resume the trade talks between the two countries which reached a deadlock recently. It was authoritatively learned in London tonight.

After it had been stated that the Soviet Government had made a fresh approach to Britain, Mr. Harold Wilson, Secretary for Overseas Trade and leader of the recent British mission to Moscow, said that Britain had taken the initiative in seeking to resume negotiations.

He denied that Britain had refused to resume negotiations and was acting under pressure from the United States.

Both sides have stated their willingness to enter into further negotiations, but no basis has yet been found for a resumption, which is held up pending the fulfilment by the Soviet Government of their obligations, up to August 1, to which they are committed under the terms of the Civil Supplies Agreement of 1941, Mr. Wilson said.

The Soviet offer, it was learned, was for a renewal of discussions on the trade side of the pact provided that the financial side can be settled, since it was over financial considerations that the negotiations broke down last month.

The new Soviet approach does not in itself provide any clues as to how an agreement might be reached.—Reuter.

Food For Britain

Sydney, Aug. 9.—The liner Stratheden sailed for London on Friday with 900 passengers, 270,000 dozen shell eggs, 400,000 boxes of butter, 100 tons of poultry and 141 tons of wine.

The liner, due in London on September 12, also carried 9,000 bags of milled food parcels.—Associated Press.

SUBSIDIES FOR TOKYO'S PUBLIC BATHHOUSES

Tokyo, Aug. 8.—The 767 public bathhouses in Tokyo, in which the city's populace happily scrub away cares in water hot enough to boil lobsters, are so hard hit by the fuel scarcity that the Welfare Bureau of the Metropolitan Police Board today decided to grant subsidies as a matter of public health necessity.

The closing of more than 100 houses which were non-electrified and the inability of war-damaged houses to rebuild because of material shortage has reduced the number now operating to 342, which is wholly inadequate to serve the people who regard a bath with almost the same importance as rice.

The metropolitan bureau, therefore, will assist proprietors to install electric furnaces and in procuring material for rebuilding plus emergency subsidies to make the business profitable.

The cost, used to be five sen per bath, has now risen to two yen—40 times the prewar cost, while fuel has risen more than 100 times.—United Press.

Labour Govt. May Look For New Leader

London, Aug. 8.—Political quarters tonight predicted the likelihood of an early Cabinet reshuffle to provide more forceful leadership for Britain's fight back to economic stability.

The general anxiety is to find a compelling personality to co-ordinate the effort. Two candidates are mentioned, the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin, who directed Britain's wartime manpower of 25,000,000 workers, and the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps, champion of "iron rations" and the hard road back to recovery.

The Cabinet is confronted by a dilemma as a consequence of the Parliamentary Labour Party's rejection of the Government's plans to receive the economic crisis.

The Cabinet must decide quickly whether to stick to its announced programme or to invest the plans with greater punch.

Some Labour quarters described the Parliamentary speech of the Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, announcing the plan, as an anti-climax to the personal triumph achieved by the Prime Minister a week before, when he obtained the enthusiastic support of what was prosaically the Parliamentary Party meeting. His supporters hoped that he would similarly rouse Parliament this week.

Actually, the Attlee speech left the Opposition and some Government followers deeply disappointed. The crisis measures, they think, fall far short of requirements.

PARTY MEETING

Mr. Attlee and his Cabinet, colleagues on Monday will hold a Party meeting whose mood is unpredictable. Arranged in answer to the demand of anything up to a hundred Labour Members, the meeting may become a grand inquest.

There is likely to be searching criticism of the Government's mixed forces cuts—considered by some forthright Labour Members to be inadequate.

Communal Riots Continue

New Delhi, Aug. 9.—One hundred and twenty persons have been killed and hundreds injured in continued communal rioting in the district of Amritsar, the provincial government of the Punjab said on Friday.

Military reinforcements were sent into the Punjab as the Moslem-Sikh riot death toll mounted and tension increased with the approach of the partition of the province between Moslem Pakistan and the predominantly Hindu Indian Union.

The communal fighting has been particularly bitter in the region of Amritsar, one of the Sikh holy cities. The Sikhs have been demonstrating against partition, which they fear will leave many of their sect a weak minority in the new Moslem state. The Punjab is considered their homeland by the Sikhs.—Associated Press.

"Peeping Tom" Uses Binoculars

London, Aug. 8.—There were so many Peeping Toms back in the reign of Edward III 600 years ago that they passed a law against them.

Today, Stanley Williams, 28-year-old barrister, was arrested under the ancient statute, which calls peeping "eavesdropping". He allegedly used binoculars to watch two chorus girls undress in the Stoll Theatre.

Williams' defence was that he was using a dictionaphone, which the girls mistook for field-glasses. He was ordered to put up £225 as a bond for his future good behaviour.—United Press.

The Saturday Morning Sports Round-Up GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOSE TO LANCs

South Africans' Easy Win

London, Aug. 8.—Although beaten by Lancashire today, Gloucestershire gained a four-points lead from Middlesex in the County cricket championship table, because they had led on the first innings.

Middlesex only drew with Kent, while Derbyshire, third in the table, were beaten by Essex.

The results of games which ended today were:

At Manchester: Lancashire beat Gloucestershire by ten wickets. Lancashire 341 and 193 for no wickets (Washbrook 307 not out, Place 73 not out). Gloucestershire 415 and 106 (Cranston five for 40).

At Northampton: Sussex beat Northamptonshire by nine wickets. Northants 153 and 308 (Davis 108, E. Davis 57, Langridge five for 61). Sussex 480 for eight declared and 40 for one.

At Leicester: Yorkshire beat Leicestershire by an innings and four runs. Yorks 341 for nine declared. Leicestershire 344 (Lester 50, Wardlaw five for 107) and 193 (Jackson 56).

At Worcester: Worcestershire beat Glamorgan by 14 runs. Worcester 170 and 340 (Palmer 124, Howarth 67, Perks 56). Glamorgan 373 for nine declared and 152 (Jackson four for 58, Howarth six for 45).

At Portsmouth: Hampshire beat Surrey by 94 runs. Hants 189 and 304 for four declared (McCorkell 92 not out). Surrey 130 and 350 (Fletcher 126, Parker 55, Barling 60).

At Canterbury: Kent drew with Middlesex. Kent 423 for eight declared and 181 for six (Valentine 56, Young four for 20). Middlesex 203 and 65 for eight declared (Hobson 140, Edrich 130, Robins 68).

At Chester: Sussex beat Derbyshire by five wickets. Essex 417 and 114 for five, Derbyshire 223 and 304.

At Nottingham: Somerset drew with Nottinghamshire. Somerset 437 and 103 for one. Notis 395 for five declared.—Reuter.

DEVASTATING BOWLING

Birmingham, Aug. 8.—The pace bowlers, Tuckett and Dawson, bowled devastatingly for an hour and 55 minutes here today to give the South Africans victory over Warwickshire by an innings and 114 runs, with three hours to spare.

The scores were: Warwickshire 330 and 76, South Africans 520 for seven declared.

Flare started half an hour earlier today to enable the tourists to leave early for Manchester, but Tuckett and Dawson and Warwickshire's weak batting made these precautions unnecessary, the match ending before lunch.

In heavy atmosphere and on a wicket possibly affected by morning dew, Tuckett and Dawson turned in half-century successes. Dawson captured five wickets for 42 and Tuckett five for 30.

Peter Cranmer, Warwickshire's captain, knocked out 38, which included the only sixer of the match.—Reuter.

VON NIDA TAKES ANOTHER £350

Nottingham, Aug. 8.—Norman Von Nida, Australian golf professional, added another £350 to his season's winnings today when he won the "Lexus" tournament here with an aggregate of 280, which was five strokes ahead of his nearest rival, Dai Rees.

Nida has now won £2,925. This was his fifth tournament success in addition to which he shared first place in another during 12 events, including the Open and Irish championships.

Nida spread-eagled the field in the third round this morning with a record-breaking 60, which gave him a lead of seven strokes from his nearest rival to start the final round.

Oh, I Say, Look Here!

London, Aug. 8.—Spreading his arms to twirl both ends of "smasher" moustache at the same time, Raymond Glendinning, President of the Handlebar Club, today opened a new drive for members.

The qualifications for membership include moustaches with a wing-spread of at least five inches.

"You might say we are looking for moustaches with graspable extremities," said Glendinning, who is a well-known journalist and broadcaster.

He said the Club was formed at the end of the war when many returning veterans, especially those from the Royal Air Force, wanted some reason for retaining the superb lip adornment sported by so many British officers.

Among the British members are Jimmy Edwards, a comedian, Sam Costa, radio performer, John McAdam, sports columnist, and Bill Hooper, cartoonist. The American representative is comedian Johnny Colonna.

The full name of the Club is "The Society for the Cultivation and Encouragement of Hirsute Appendages with Graspable Extremities."—United Press.

Sweeping Victory

London, Aug. 8.—A Swedish national water-polo team opened its English tour tonight with a victory over Kingsbury, a London team, by 13 goals to five.

The visitors were superior in every department of the game and were never extended. They were four goals in front in the first two minutes and led 12 goals to two at the interval, after which the London team started to rally.

Sweden, however, were obviously playing well within their capabilities.—Reuter.

EDITORIAL Council Of Women

THE intelligent and dignified tone of the meeting held on Thursday to inaugurate a Hong Kong Council of Women, as well as the obvious zest with which the audience followed the proceedings, gives promise of a new and lively interest being taken by women in Hong Kong's public affairs. First encouraging sign is the awakened consciousness of the need for greater participation by women in the affairs of the Colony. It was the women themselves who sought inclusion in the jury panel lists and they have followed this up by forming an organisation which, if effectively sustained, can play an important part in Hong Kong's civic development.

The objectives of the Council are interesting. It is intended to become affiliated to the International Council of Women, for the purpose of helping to promote international friendship and to take part in consultations for the promotion of the welfare of mankind and to secure the removal of discrimination

against women. It is the avowed intention of the Council to endeavour to obtain representation on the future municipal council, apparently by mass voting for women nominees, and it seems likely it will adopt the Chief Justice's suggestion and put forward a sufficient number of members to assist in Tenancy Tribunal work. Service on the tribunals offers a grand opportunity for the Council of Women to demonstrate the genuineness of their professed eagerness for sharing responsibility in public affairs. The need for an enlarged panel is urgent, for as the Telegraph discloses today elsewhere on this page, the tribunals are facing a growing backlog of cases. Demands on the time and energies of the present panel have become excessive; yet it is work that must be done. That Hong Kong has a sufficient number of women capable of serving on the tribunals is unquestioned. The challenge now is to their courage and their sincerity. Hong Kong will be sorely disappointed if they fail to meet that challenge.